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Mountain tourism and sustainability in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan: a research review

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UNIVERSITY
OF CENTRAL ASIA

MOUNTAIN SOCIETIES RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Mountain Tourism and Sustainability in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan: A Research Review

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OF CENTRAL ASIA

MOUNTAIN SOCIETIES RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Mountain Tourism and Sustainability in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan: A Research Review

The Mountain Societies Research Institute (MSRI) is dedicated to supporting and enhancing the resilience and quality of life of mountain societies through the generation and application of sound research. MSRI has five objectives:

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Scenic view near Bash-Gumbez, Eastern Pamir Highway,
Tajikistan. (Matt Traver 2013)

Preface

The Mountain Societies Research Institute (MSRI) generates and applies knowledge to public policy and development practice with the goal of improving the quality of life for people of the mountain areas in Central Asia.

The MSRI Background Paper Series strategically identifies research priorities and pathways to application for MSRI's priority areas. Through structured analysis of the literature, MSRI Background Papers provide an assessment of the state of research in each thematic area as it relates to Central Asian mountain societies, and identify and prioritise knowledge gaps and opportunities for linking research to decision making for policy and practice. The papers also serve as a foundation for future MSRI research and aim to inspire other researchers and funding organisations. The first two background papers were on *Pastoralism and Farming in Central Asia's Mountains*¹ and *Sustainable Land Management in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan*².

This paper, the third in the series, focuses on Mountain Tourism and Sustainability in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. More than half the population in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan reside in remote, mountainous communities with limited infrastructure, services and opportunity. In these communities, incomes are low, natural resources are being depleted, and the lack of social and economic assets and opportunity have forced many people to seek opportunity elsewhere. The number of Tajiks leaving the country between 2004 and 2009 exceeded the number of foreign tourists entering Tajikistan by over 30 percent (UN and ECFU, 2004).

In these poor, remote mountain communities, tourism can have a positive economic impact and serve as a development tool, if planned and managed strategically.

This paper, based on an extensive literature review of 87 international and regional academic and development publications, provides a comprehensive analysis of the state of knowledge on mountain tourism and sustainability in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The literature was analysed using the United Nation's 12 Aims of Sustainable Tourism Framework (UNEP&UNWTO, 2005). The analysis found considerable knowledge gaps related to critical social and environmental aspects of sustainable tourism. The research overwhelmingly focused on economic components of tourism, despite evidence that the sector is consistently underperforming in both countries. Tourism development often takes place without the participation of communities, leading to unsustainable projects and few economic gains for the communities impacted the most.

The review exposed the need for more research, as well as the utility of using applied research in the future development of sustainable tourism projects. It highlights the need to build on examples of successful participatory approaches, such as community-based tourism efforts in Kyrgyzstan. Finally, recommendations are made for a research agenda on sustainable mountain tourism development in the remote mountainous communities of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

The MSRI research team, including Researcher Qobiljon Shokirov, Research Fellow Aisulu Abdykadyrova, Senior Research Scientist Chad Dear and Senior Technical Writer Sia Nowrojee worked collaboratively across disciplines, languages and continents to produce this background paper.

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1 <http://msri.ucentralasia.org/events.asp?Nid=215>

2 <http://msri.ucentralasia.org/events.asp?Nid=589>

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Executive Summary

This paper reviews and discusses the state of the knowledge on mountain tourism and sustainability in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industries and is the world's largest employer (UNWTO 2012). In many developing countries, tourism is one of the largest income earners (UNWTO 2012), and is an established part of development strategies (Owen-Edmunds 2011). Mountain areas often have latent tourism potential due to their natural and cultural resources, and tourism is one of a limited number of non-agropastoral livelihoods available to mountain communities. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are predominantly mountainous countries with relatively intact natural and cultural resources, despite socio-economic and political fragility and periods of instability. The governments of these countries are increasingly emphasising tourism.

To improve planning and management of tourism in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, it is critical to build capacity to more deeply understand key tourism and sustainability issues. Research on tourism should be conducted in a way that is accessible, useful and applied by policymakers and practitioners to their work.

This paper provides the findings of a systematic review of research on mountain tourism in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and an analysis of the contribution of the literature to more sustainable tourism. The paper identifies knowledge gaps and recommends future research that can directly contribute to sustainable tourism research, policy and practice in the two countries. Eighty-seven publications were collected and analysed, including academic literature published in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and grey and academic literature published in international journals about Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Nearly all the literature was from the post-independence period (1991-2012), with the exception of a few publications, mainly dissertation summaries from the last decade of the Soviet period (1984-1990).

The literature was analysed using the United Nation's 12 Aims of Sustainable Tourism Framework (UNEP & UNWTO 2005), which provides a comprehensive model in which to view tourism as a means to achieve development goals. For example, the framework addresses the equitable distribution of economic benefits and the effective management of the natural and human-created resources on which tourism is based. The framework also suggests local control of tourism resources and different stakeholders working together.

Each publication was assessed across economic, social and environmental aims elaborated in the framework. Extracted or paraphrased data was coded under each aim, further categorised and assigned sub-codes based on themes that emerged from the data. These themes were used to organise a synthesis of qualitative data. To identify knowledge gaps, emerging themes and policy areas associated with each of the 12 aims were compared. Quantitative analysis of the publications was conducted across variables such as types of publication, tourism, geographic scope and tourism destination.

The 12 Aims of Sustainable Tourism Framework provides, and implicitly recommends, a balance in the consideration of economic, social and environmental aims related to tourism. In contrast to this balance, the review found that research on tourism in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan overwhelmingly focuses on economic aims (87 percent). Nearly half (48 percent) of the reviewed literature focused on "economic viability" and almost a third (31 percent) on "local prosperity". Many publications suggest that tourism has economic potential in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. However, they also highlight the poor economic performance of the sector. Despite the overwhelming focus on economic aims, there are still considerable gaps in research regarding tourism-related sustainable economic growth, and only a handful of tourism initiatives have delivered tangible benefits to host destinations.

Social and environmental aspects of tourism, such as visitor fulfillment, resource efficiency, employment quality and environmental quality were less evident in the literature. The few publications that focused on non-economic aims identified emerging social and environmental challenges caused or exacerbated by tourism.

By broadening the scope and strengthening the quality of applied research, research can support the development of tourism as a driver of economic and social development in mountain communities and more broadly in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. To this end, recommendations are made for strengthening research on economic aims to focus on sustainable activities that benefit the communities most impacted by tourism and for expanding the focus of research to encompass social and environmental aims.

1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industries and is the world's largest employer (UNWTO 2012). In developing countries, tourism is one of the largest income earners (UNWTO 2012). Tourism is now an established part of the development strategy of many countries, including developing, recently independent states, post-conflict and even conflict-plagued countries (Owen-Edmunds 2011). Mountain areas often have latent tourism potential due to their natural and cultural resources. Tourism may be one of a limited number of non-agropastoral livelihoods available to mountain communities, which are often located far from markets.

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are predominantly mountainous countries with relatively intact natural and cultural resources, despite recent socio-economic and political fragility and periods of instability. The governments of these countries are increasingly emphasising tourism. Tourism was identified as a priority sector in Kyrgyzstan's 2013 National Strategy for Sustainable Development and was the focus of a recent ten-year action plan for small and medium enterprise development. In 2012, Kyrgyzstan instituted a visa-free regime for tourists from more than 40 countries. Tajikistan adopted a national tourism Development Programme for 2009-2019 in which mountain and nature-based tourism is a central component. The document highlights the development of ecotourism as a priority in protected areas and national parks, which occupy about 22 percent of the territory of Tajikistan (Tajik National Tourism Concept Note 2009). The Government of Tajikistan has hosted an annual National Tourism Conference since 2010.

To improve planning and management of tourism in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, it is critical to build capacity to more deeply understand key tourism and sustainability issues. Additionally, research on tourism should be conducted in a way that is accessible, useful and applied by policymakers and practitioners.

This paper provides the findings of a systematic review of research on mountain tourism in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and an analysis of the contribution of the literature to more sustainable tourism. The paper identifies knowledge gaps and recommends future research that can directly contribute to sustainable tourism research, policy and practice.

The remaining part of this section provides a brief history of tourism and tourism research in the Kirghiz and Tajik Soviet Socialist Republics (SSRs). Section 2 defines key concepts employed in this paper and introduces



Tourists on a day hike in Varzob Valley, Tajikistan.
(Helga Lerkelund 2012)



Figure 1. Commonwealth of Independent States - Central Asian States.

the framework used to guide the research review: the 12 Aims of Sustainable Tourism Framework (UNWTO and UNEP 2005). Section 3 describes the methods used to carry out the review and section 4 presents the findings of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the literature. Finally, section 5 includes conclusions and recommendations for future tourism research.

1.1 Brief History of Tourism in the Kirghiz and Tajik SSRs

While tourism was initiated in the early years of the USSR, as a non-manufacturing sector, it was not an early Soviet priority. It was not until the post-World War II Khrushchev era that international tourism was developed “as a source of hard currency and as a means to demonstrate Soviet economic achievements, and a way to market the Soviet paradise” (Zhizhanova 2011:2). National tourism was developed to “enlarge...people’s belief of national self-consciousness and feelings of pride and devotion to their country” (Zhizhanova 2011:6).

Intourist and *Sputnik* were the key government bureaus involved in international tourism. *Intourist* managed hotels, recreation centres, transportation, guides, visas and travel itineraries for foreign tourists. Tourists were allowed to travel within the USSR and meet Soviet citizens under supervision of the Committee for State Security (KGB) (Zhizhanova 2011).



An American early poster advertising the Soviet Union as a tourism destination (http://www.sovietposters.ru/english/index_1.htm)



An early Sputnik propaganda poster encouraging youth to engage in tourist activities (http://www.sovietposters.ru/english/index_1.htm)

Soviet citizens wishing to travel abroad went through multiple screenings to ensure that their beliefs aligned with Soviet ideology (Shevirin 2003). Citizens approved for international travel were mostly allowed to travel to socialist countries such as Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria. Travel to capitalist countries was limited (Zhizhanova 2011).

Sputnik (the Bureau of International Youth Tourism) developed youth exchange and international tourism and sports for individuals aged 16 to 30 within and outside the USSR (Fedechko 2013). The agency had its own transportation, guides and recreation centres and camps. Between 1958 and 1986, about 6.3 million Soviet and foreign youth engaged in exchange tourist programmes (Zhizhanova 2011; Kvartalnov and Fedorchenko 1989). The 6th World Festival of Youth and Students in July 1957 was attended by over 34,000 youth and was a historic occasion, with the Soviet Union “opening its doors to the world” (Zhizhanova 2011:3).

These activities led to the development of sports tourism and health resorts. Each Republic had a Central Council for Tourism and Excursions, which developed local tourism, excursions and sports tourism (Encyclopedia 1984), with the goals of encouraging patriotism, promoting regional studies and facilitating sightseeing and athletic training. Major tourist destinations were connected by All-Union travel routes, offering hiking, cycling, trekking and expeditions throughout the USSR. These were popular among youth in the 1970s.

The central government also ran a subsidised social tourism programme for people with special needs (Senin 2003) and for professional trade unions, with the goal of increasing the wellbeing of the population. Social tourism provided workers with treatment in sanatoriums and access to resorts and Pioneer camps for their children (Musin 1982). This increased the number of recreation facilities and destinations (Abdykadyrov 1984).

In 1945, the Kirghiz SSR established a tourism and alpinism department under the Republic Committee of Physical Culture and Sports to train instructors, create infrastructure and promote tourism and alpinism. The Central Council for Tourism and Excursion, established in 1959, developed camp sites in Frunze (now Bishkek), Ulan, Kyrchyn, Issyk-Kul, Sary-Chelek, Arstanbap and Osh. In 1977, the Republic and State Tourism Federations were created, further developing

mountain tourism, including water sports and speleological explorations. By 1979, over one million people had participated in tourism activities in the Kirghiz SSR (Marechek 1982).

Tourism development in the Tajik SSR was initiated in 1962. The Central Council for Tourism and Excursion had highly trained guides and instructors in sightseeing, camping and mountain tourism. Six All-Union and twelve local travel routes and planned tours and trekking routes for local backpackers were developed, enabling tourists to visit base camps at Varzob, Hissar Range, Lake Kulikalon, Lake Pairon, Lake Iskanderkul and the Fann mountains (Encyclopedia 1984: 256). In 1981, tourism reached its peak, with 30,914 tourists from 58 countries visiting the Tajik SSR. The most popular mountain destinations were the Fann, Turkestan and Hissar mountain ranges (Encyclopedia 1984: 257).

Non-academic publications on tourism in the Kirghiz and Tajik SSRs were published throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Pivovarova 2010), including traveler diaries and articles in popular journals. Soviet guidebooks on biking, climbing, mountaineering and long-distance trekking included mountain destinations.³ The prominent Soviet tourism journal, *Tourist*, included accounts of early exploration across the Soviet Union, including the Kirghiz and Tajik SSRs.

The first academic research on tourism in the Kirghiz SSR was conducted by geographer Abdykadyrov (1984) who investigated recreational functions of the Issyk-Kul region as part of his advanced degree research at Saint Petersburg University. No academic research on tourism was conducted in the Tajik SSR; the first research was published in independent Tajikistan in 2002.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the civil war in Tajikistan dramatically impacted the tourism industry in newly independent Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. All-Union travel routes were dissolved as governments oriented tourism development within national borders. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan developed national strategies on sustainable development, including tourism, in 1999 and 2004 respectively. In both countries, tourism has received international development assistance. The little momentum developed for tourism research in the Kirghiz SSR was largely halted after the Soviet collapse and withdrawal of research support. While internationally-supported project-based literature has increased dramatically in both countries, academic research on tourism has increased minimally. Nonetheless, for contemporary tourism research to best contribute to sustainable tourism development, we must fully understand the current state of research in order to build on or challenge it.



An Early Soviet Union – Travel Poster of Central Asia (<http://digitalpostercollection.com/travel/tourism/soviet-union/the-golden-road-to-turkestan/>)

³ These included publications by Grigorev (1978), Sogrin (1974), Paganucii (1972), Shirkin (1984), Maksimov (1971) Onuchin (1979).

2. Key Concepts and Framework

Defining ‘mountain tourism and sustainability’ requires understanding each of these concepts - mountains, tourism, sustainability - as well as the relationships between them. There are a wide variety of definitions of these terms. This section outlines the definitions adopted for each concept, the relationships between them and includes a working understanding of ‘mountain tourism and sustainability’.

The section also introduces a conceptual framework identifying 12 aims of sustainable tourism that the research team used to guide the analysis of literature and the development of an applied research agenda.

2.1 Key Terms

Tourism: According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), “Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which imply tourism expenditure.”

Sustainability: The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) or Brundtland Report provides the most widely recognised definition of sustainable development: “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (1987:43).

Sustainable Tourism: UNWTO defines sustainable tourism as “Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities” (UNEP and UNWTO 2005:11-12).

Sustainable tourism is not defined as a particular type of tourism (e.g. eco-tourism) or a particular scale of tourism (e.g. small scale or community-level). Our discussions, therefore, do not focus on determining what is or is not sustainable. Instead, we adopt the premise promoted by Clarke (1997), which emphasises that all types and scales of tourism can be made more sustainable.

Eco-tourism: The definition of eco-tourism that best guides the discussions in this paper is “Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people” (TIES, 1990).

Mountains: Mountains are often defined by their physical and geographic features; for example, as areas of land higher than 300 metres (984 feet) (UNEP 2007). Mountains can also be defined as “zones of similar altitude, slope and vegetation type [which] usually comprise a montane, subalpine and alpine zone” (UNEP 2007:7). Funnell and Price (2003) define mountains more subjectively: “To a large extent...a mountain is a mountain because of the part it plays in popular imagination. It may be hardly more than a hill but if it has distinct individuality, or plays a more or less symbolic role to the people, it is likely to be rated a mountain by those who live at its base” (2). We acknowledge both physical and symbolic characteristics of mountains.

Sustainable Mountain Development: The concept of sustainable mountain development was formalised through its inclusion in Agenda 21, the primary document resulting from the UN Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Earth Summit) in 1992. Chapter 13, entitled Managing Fragile Ecosystems: Sustainable Mountain Development states that “Governments at the appropriate level, with the support of the relevant international and regional organisations, should diversify mountain economies, inter alia, by creating and/or strengthening tourism, in accordance with integrated management of mountain areas” (UNSD 1992:119). More recently, a UN Food and Agricultural Organisation report described sustainable mountain development as “require[ing] that mountain ecosystems be managed in ways that allow them to provide goods and services for local livelihoods and lowland people, now and in the future” (2011:5).



Tourists trekking near Artuch camp base, Fann Mountains, Tajikistan (Qobiljon Shokirov, 2012)

We deliberately linked the above concepts to form a working understanding of ‘mountain tourism and sustainability’. We understand mountain tourism to refer to tourism in, around or affecting mountain areas and the communities living in and around them. We understand mountain tourism and sustainability to refer to efforts to make all types of mountain tourism more sustainable. Finally, we contextualise mountain tourism and sustainability within the broader concept of sustainable mountain development.

2.2 A Framework for Analysing Mountain Tourism and Sustainability

To further clarify key concepts and provide a context for structuring the review of literature and analysis of findings, we adopted a conceptual framework to guide this background paper. The 12 Aims of Sustainable Tourism Framework (see Box 1) was developed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UNWTO as part of an agenda to influence policies for more sustainable tourism that:

- “Minimis(es) the negative impacts of tourism on society and the environment”; and
- “Maximis(es) tourism’s positive and creative contribution to local economies, the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, and the equality of life of hosts and visitors”. (2005:18).

Box 1. The 12 Aims of Sustainable Tourism Framework (UNEP and UNWTO 2005: 18-19).

Economic Viability: To ensure the viability and competitiveness of tourism destinations and enterprises, so that they are able to continue to prosper and deliver benefits in the long term.

Local Prosperity: To maximise the contribution of tourism to the economic prosperity of the host destination, including the proportion of visitor spending that is retained locally.

Employment Quality: To strengthen the number and quality of local jobs created and supported by tourism, including the level of pay, conditions of service and availability to all without discrimination by gender, race, disability or in other ways.

Social Equity: To seek a widespread and fair distribution of economic and social benefits from tourism throughout the recipient community, including improving opportunities, income and services available to the poor.

Visitor Fulfillment: To provide a safe, satisfying and fulfilling experience for visitors, available to all without discrimination by gender, race, disability or in other ways.

Local Control: To engage and empower local communities in planning and decision making about the management and future development of tourism in their area, in consultation with other stakeholders.

Community Well Being: To maintain and strengthen the quality of life in local communities, including social structures and access to resources, amenities and life support systems, avoiding any form of social degradation or exploitation.

Cultural Richness: To respect and enhance the historic heritage, authentic culture, traditions and distinctiveness of host communities.

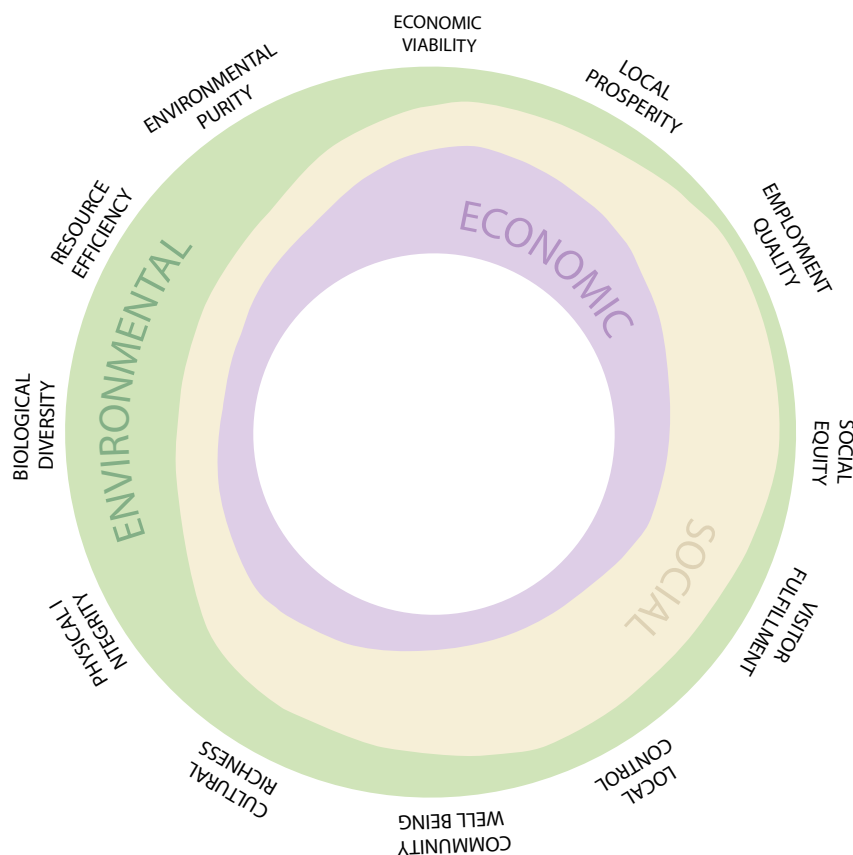
Physical Integrity: To maintain and enhance the quality of landscapes, both urban and rural, and avoid the physical and visual degradation of the environment.

Biological Diversity: To support the conservation of natural areas, habitats and wildlife, and minimise damage to them.

Resource Efficiency: To minimise the use of scarce and non-renewable resources in the development and operation of tourism facilities and services.

Environmental Purity: To minimise the pollution of air, water and land and the generation of waste by tourism enterprises and visitors.

Figure 9. Relationship Between the 12 Aims and the Pillars of Sustainability



(UNEP and UNWTO 2005)

Each aim considers environmental, economic and social issues and impacts. Figure 9 illustrates the 12 aims in relation to these three components of sustainability. UNEP and UNWTO used the aims to identify policy areas to be addressed through specific policies and other actions to promote the aims.

One purpose of this paper is to identify areas for research that will contribute to improved understanding and action towards more sustainable mountain tourism. The policy components identified by UNEP and UNWTO also represent possible areas for applied research (see Annex 1).

The 12 Aims of Sustainable Tourism Framework acknowledges but does not explicitly illustrate relationships between concepts, however, it does provide a thorough description of the key concepts involved in sustainable tourism. This list and these descriptions will serve as an initial guide for the analysis in Chapter 3.

3. Methods

This section describes the methods used to select, find and analyse literature on mountain tourism and sustainability⁴.

3.1 Selecting Literature

3.1.1 Substantive, Geographic and Temporal Selection Criteria

The definitions of key concepts related to mountain tourism and sustainability and the 12 Aims of Sustainable Tourism Framework guided decisions on how to select publications for the research review. Specifically, literature had to address at least one of the economic, environmental or social components of sustainable tourism in the 12 Aims of Sustainable Tourism Framework.

We selected publications that presented findings based on empirical investigation in Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan and included a clear analytical component supported by methodically collected data or analysed observations. We excluded guidebooks, personal accounts of expeditions and articles in popular travel journals. We also excluded scientific publications that focused on technical issues not directly relevant to mountain tourism and sustainability, such as the body of literature on the physiological benefits of treatments associated with health tourism. Finally, we excluded publications that only mentioned tourism as part of a more broadly focused theme.

The geographic scope of this paper is Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Publications focusing on particular regions or tourism destinations and addressing national-level tourism issues in either country were reviewed. Literature that did not present findings based on research in Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan or that only briefly mentioned these countries was excluded.

In terms of timeframe, we aimed to capture the entire period in which research was conducted on tourism, beginning in Kyrgyzstan in the mid 1980s and in Tajikistan in the early 2000s, through 2012.

⁴ The research review included some methods that are similar to or adapted from those used in the research review for MSRI's Background Paper No. 2 on Sustainable Land Management (Shigaeva et al 2013).

3.1.2 Types of Literature and Processes for Selecting Publications

Three types of literature were included:

- International academic literature
- Academic literature published in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan⁵
- Grey literature

Graduate-level theses and dissertations were included as part of international and local academic literature. The processes for selecting publications in these three categories are described below.

3.1.2.1 International Academic Literature

International academic literature includes articles in journals that are published by a publishing company or organisation having undergone peer-review or an impartial evaluation by a person or group of people unaffiliated with the author or the author's organisation and who are experts in the field. Our goal was to identify all international academic literature that met our substantive, geographic and temporal criteria. We conducted "full-text" keyword searches on major academic online libraries, including Web of Knowledge, Scopus, and Google Scholar. We used "tourism" and "hospitality" (in separate searches) as keywords and combined this with the following location keywords: "Kyrgyzstan", "Kyrgyz Republic", "Tajikistan", "Pamirs", "Pamir Alai" and "GBAO" (Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast). Searches were conducted in both Russian and English languages on Google and Google Scholar. We searched the bibliographies of selected publications to identify additional publications that did not appear in keyword searches.

3.1.2.2 Academic Literature Published in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

Hard copies of academic literature published in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan can be found in the libraries of the national Academy of Sciences and local universities. While some libraries have searchable electronic databases for hard and soft copy resources specific to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, there is no comprehensive electronic archiving system and therefore no means of thoroughly conducting keyword searches. Libraries have hardcopy card catalogue systems for tourism but collections are limited to books, guidebooks and newspaper articles and do not include academic articles. Consequently, the best way to identify academic literature was to manually review the tables of contents of all available hard copies of relevant journals in local libraries.



Card catalogue system at the library of Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tajikistan. (Qobiljon Shokirov 2014)

There are many journals and other academic and non-academic literature published in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan that include tourism issues. These vary in the degree to which they include information based on empirical investigation, a clear analytical component and have undergone objective quality control. We focused on academic articles in Higher Attestation Committee (HAC)⁶-certified journals, which includes the highest quality publications in all recognised disciplines, including those related to tourism. There are no HAC-certified journals dedicated specifically to tourism; articles that address tourism are in different journals. Table 1 lists the HAC-certified journals searched and Table 2 lists the libraries searched.

Table 1. Selected Journals Published in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

Journal name	Country of publication	First publication date	Publication schedule	Estimated % of issues available in libraries
Journal of the Academy of Sciences of the Kyrgyz Republic	Kyrgyzstan	1966	Quarterly	90
Science and New Technology	Kyrgyzstan	1993	4-6 times a year	60
Journal of the Kyrgyz National University, named after J. Balasagyn	Kyrgyzstan	1998	Quarterly	70
Journal of Higher Education Institutions	Kyrgyzstan	2002	Quarterly	60
Journal of the Kyrgyz Economic University	Kyrgyzstan	2004	Quarterly	85
Reports of Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan	Tajikistan	1951	Bi-monthly	95
Journal of the Tajik National University	Tajikistan	1990	Quarterly	95
Journal of Pedagogical University	Tajikistan	1999	Quarterly	30
Journal of Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, Edition on Economic Sciences	Tajikistan	2001	Quarterly	95

Table 2. Libraries Searched in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan
National Library of Kyrgyz Republic	Library of Technical Patenting
Central Scientific Library of the National Academy of Sciences of the Kyrgyz Republic	Library Firdausi
Library of Kyrgyz National University	Central Library of Dushanbe
Republic Library for Children and Youth, named after K.Bayalinov	Library of Tajik National University
Library of Kyrgyz Economic University	Library of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tajikistan
Library of Kyrgyz-Turkish University Manas	
Library of the State Academy under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic	

3.1.3 Grey Literature

Grey literature includes documents published by governments, organisations, and businesses but not by commercial publishers. Applying our substantive, geographic and temporal criteria, we included the follow-

⁶ HAC is a national government agency in Russia and some other post-Soviet states that oversees the awarding of advanced degrees. HAC has compiled and certified a series of journals in which scientific and other articles are published. HAC of the Kyrgyz Republic is the state scientific expert body, subordinated to the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, which develops and implements a unified state policy and attestation of scientific and scientific-pedagogical personnel, awarding degrees (*kandidat nauk* and *doktor nauk*) and assigning academic titles (docent, professor). HAC was never established in Tajikistan, even during Soviet times, and HAC of the Russian Federation serves as the responsible entity for Tajikistan.

ing types of grey literature: conference proceedings; technical reports from government agencies, non-governmental organisations, multi-lateral organisations, international financial institutions or research groups; external evaluation reports of development projects; non-HAC certified journal articles; and policy or development strategies.

We also included reports from tourism industry stakeholders such as leading tour operators and agencies, and hotels and camp owners that contained perspectives on the tourism industry in Kyrgyzstan and opinions and recommendations on tourism development by experts and professional tour operators. Such reports are published in Kyrgyzstan but not in Tajikistan.

Grey literature publications were identified through recommendations from key informants and then through a snowball approach, including searching the reference sections of all identified literature. Many initially identified documents did not include findings based on empirical investigation or a clear analytical component and were subsequently excluded.

3.2 Data Entry and Analysis

Data were extracted from each document for quantitative and qualitative analysis and entered into a digital Lime Survey form that was linked to a database (See Annex 2).

3.2.1 Analysing the State of Research on Mountain Tourism and Sustainability in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

To qualitatively analyse the state of research on mountain tourism and sustainability in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, we first categorised each document based on its fit within one or more of the 12 Aims of Sustainable Tourism Framework. We then identified and extracted direct quotations or paraphrased text that represented the primary contribution of the document. A first-level code consistent with the 12 aims was assigned to the text. Narrative data coded under each aim was then further categorised and assigned sub-codes based on themes that emerged from the data. These themes were used to organise a synthesis of the literature. To identify knowledge gaps, we compared the themes that emerged to the policy areas associated with each of the 12 Aims of Sustainable Tourism Framework (UNEP and UNWTO 2005).

To quantitatively analyse the distribution of research across other variables, we coded each document based on publication type, tourism type, geographic scope and focus on specific tourism destinations. Descriptive statistical analyses of these distributions were also used to highlight gaps in research.

4. Results

This section presents the analyses of the publications selected for review. Section 4.1 includes a descriptive quantitative analysis of the publications. Section 4.2 focuses on the state of mountain tourism and sustainability research in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and includes quantitative and qualitative analyses structured by the UNWTO/UNEP 12 Aims of Sustainable Tourism Framework.

4.1 Quantitative Description of Selected Publications

Eighty seven publications were selected for analysis based on the types of publications and criteria described in Section 3. This included:

- Academic articles published in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan – 45 (52 percent)
- International academic articles – 11 (13 percent)
- Grey literature – 31 (35 percent)

All academic articles published in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were Russian language publications, with the exception of one in Kyrgyz and one in Tajik. All international academic articles and most of the grey literature were in English; four grey literature publications were in Russian.

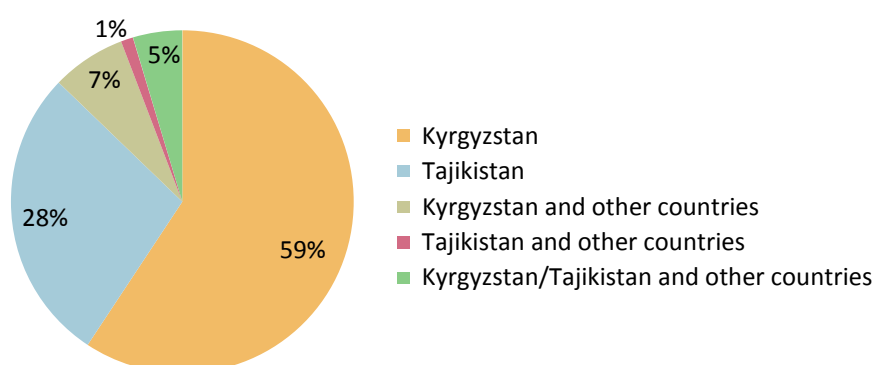
There were additional publications identified that met the substantive criteria, but not the empirical and analytical criteria described in Section 3.

The publications were categorised by country, tourism destination and tourism type.

4.1.1 What country(s) do the selected publications focus on?

Most of the selected publications (59 percent) focused on Kyrgyzstan, 28 percent focused on Tajikistan, and the remaining 13 percent focused on Kyrgyzstan and/or Tajikistan and other countries (Figure 3).

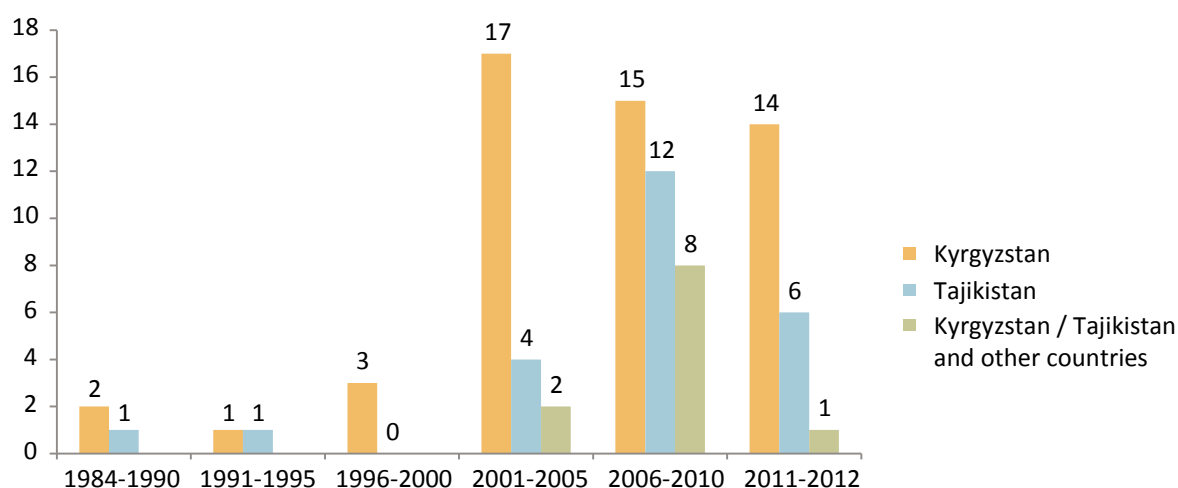
Figure 3. What country(s) do the selected publications focus on?



4.1.2 What is the distribution of the selected publications by year?

Most of the publications that met the criteria were published between 2001 and 2012; very few published before 2001 were selected (Figure 4).

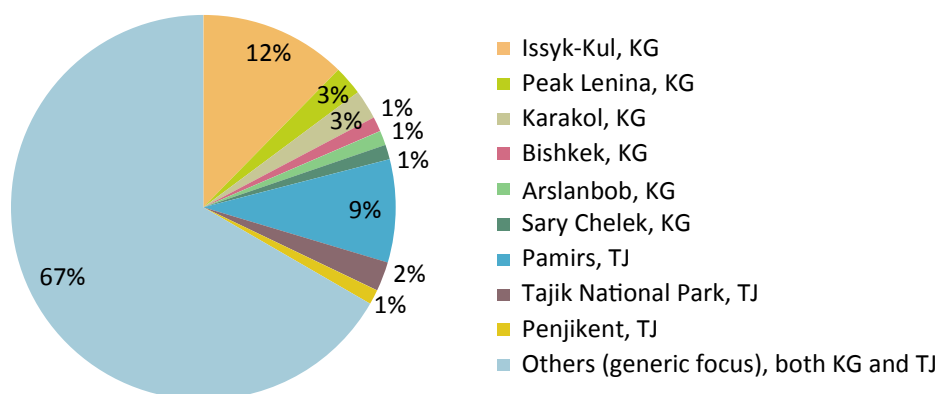
Figure 4. Number of publications in 1984-2012 in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.



4.1.3 What tourism destinations do the selected publications focus on?

Nearly two-thirds of the selected publications (67 percent) did not focus on a specific tourism destination and instead focused on national or regional tourism issues. Among the specific destinations focused on in the remaining publications, Issyk-Kul in Kyrgyzstan (12 percent) and the Pamirs in Tajikistan (9 percent) were the most popular. Other destinations, such as Arslanbob, Bishkek, Karokol, Penjikent and Ala Archa in Kyrgyzstan, were each the focus of three or fewer publications (less than 3 percent) (Figure 5).

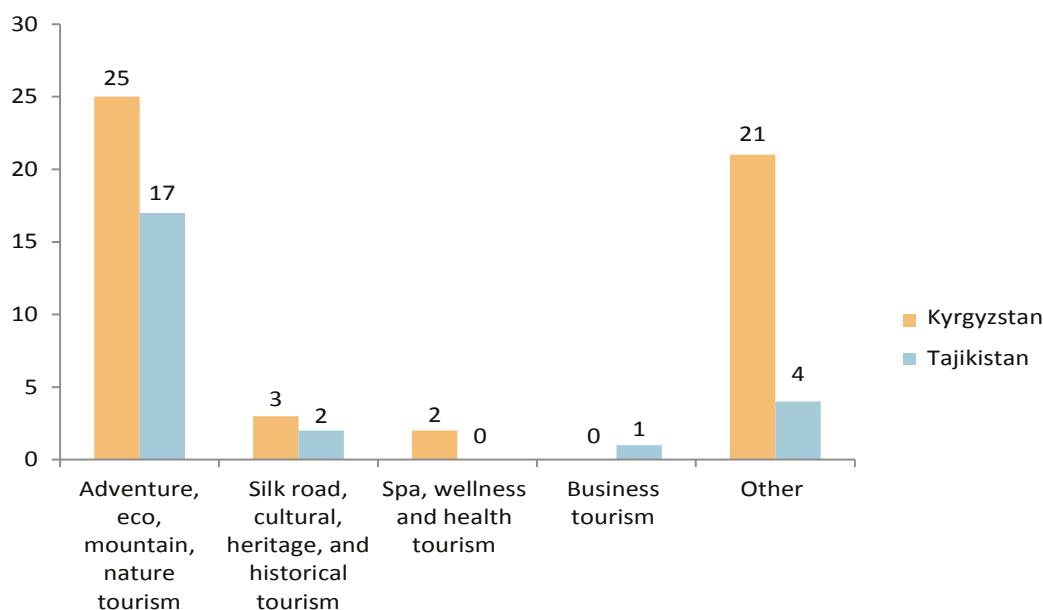
Figure 5. Focus on Specific Tourist Destination in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.



4.1.4 What type of tourism did the selected publications focus on?

Nearly half the selected publications on Kyrgyzstan (25 or 49 percent) and more than two-thirds of the publications on Tajikistan (17 or 71 percent) focused on adventure, eco-, mountain and nature tourism. Small proportions of the literature focused on the Silk Road, cultural heritage and historical tourism; spa and wellness tourism; and business tourism in both countries. Finally, in Kyrgyzstan (21 publications or 41 percent) and in Tajikistan (4 publications or 17 percent) of literature focused on other types of tourism or did not specify a particular type of tourism (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Types of Tourism Researched in Publication in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.



4.2 The State of Mountain Tourism and Sustainability Research on Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

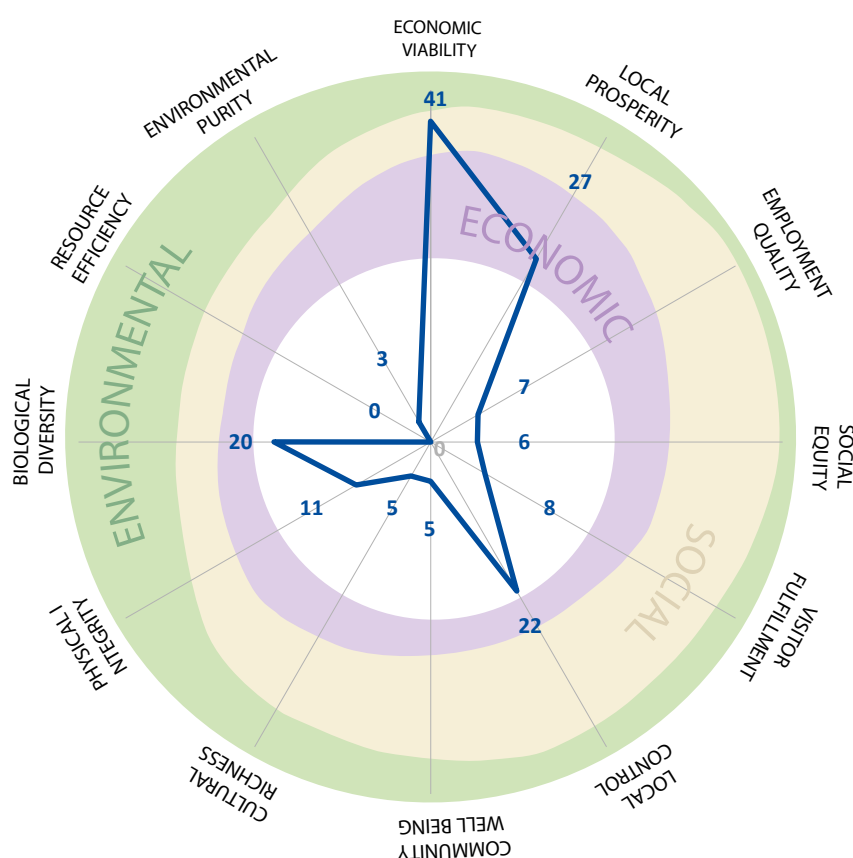
This section includes the results of quantitative and qualitative analyses of the primary contributions of the selected publications. The results are structured using the UNEP/UNWTO 12 Aims of Sustainable Tourism Framework.

The main content of each publication was attributed to one or more of the aims in the 12 Aims of Sustainable Tourism Framework (Figure 7). Of the 87 publications analysed, a large majority (87 percent) were attributed to the economically oriented aims of “economic viability” (48 percent), “local prosperity” (31 percent), and “employment quality” (8 percent).

There were 46 publications (53 percent) attributed to the five socially oriented aims. “Local control” (25 percent) was the most popular. The remaining socially-oriented aims of “visitor fulfillment (9 percent),” “social equity” (7 percent), “community wellbeing” (6 percent) and “cultural richness” (6 percent) received minimal attention in the literature.

The four environmentally oriented aims were the focus of 34 publications (39 percent) publications. Within these, “biological diversity” (23 percent) and “physical integrity” (13 percent) were the most popular, while “environmental purity” was the focus of (3 percent), and “resources efficiency” was not featured at all.

Figure 7. Distribution of reviewed literature through the 12 Aims of Sustainable Tourism Framework



After attributing the main contribution of each publication to one or more of the 12 aims, we identified and further categorised the most prominent topics. The description of each of these topics, including excerpts from the publications, illustrates the prominent contributions to research on tourism and sustainability in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Each section below includes the title, definition of the aim in italics, and the number of publications attributed to it. Sub-sections are organised thematically. The main findings relevant to these subsections are summarised in italics under each sub-section title. Longer descriptions of the research, including excerpts, follow. Interpretation of the findings is included in Section 5. Finally, just as the 12 aims overlap significantly, so do many of the topics that emerged. In each section, we emphasise how overlapping topics are relevant to the particular aim being discussed.

4.2.1 Economic Viability (41 publications)

“To ensure the viability and competitiveness of tourism destinations and enterprises, so that they are able to continue to prosper and deliver benefits in the long term” (UNEP and UNWTO 2005:30-32)

Economic viability was the focus of the largest number of publications. These publications emphasised the primary role of tourism in supporting economic growth and identified challenges to and opportunities for economic viability. Challenges include: inadequate regulatory frameworks, tourism services and infrastructure, skills and vocational training, and stakeholder collaboration. While each challenge can be viewed as an opportunity, two were consistently identified as having the potential to make tourism more economically viable: cross border tourism (with Afghanistan, China, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan) and eco-tourism. A consistent message in the publications was that the tourism sector is not achieving its economic potential.

Contribution of tourism to economic growth

Tourism has contributed to economic growth and created additional sources of income in rural mountain areas of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. However, tourism is underperforming economically, compared to its potential.

Since the late 1990s, and with the exception of periods marked by political instability, the tourism sector in Kyrgyzstan has consistently increased its share of GDP.⁷ The direct contribution of the tourism sector reached 4.2 percent of GDP in 2011 (NSC 2011). In 2011, net exports of travel services were USD 223.8 million and the average foreign tourist spent USD 86 per day in Kyrgyzstan (SIAR Research & Consulting 2012). Atyshev calculated that, in Kyrgyzstan, “the economic benefit of newly built resorts and recreational facilities is roughly more than KGS 60 million (USD 1.2 million) per year” (2008:52).

⁷ Tourism statistics in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are neither transparent nor reliable. Both governments publish tourism data through their statistics agencies, but do not provide the source or methods used to generate data. The statistics in this section were included in the publications selected for review.



The scenic Pamir Highway connects Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Western China and Afghanistan. (Dieter Zirinig 2011)



Jetty Uguz Valley: Silk Road old and new (Andie Arbeit 2005)

In Tajikistan, national level statistics were less accessible and reliable. Consultancy reports focused on community-level projects did include some economic analysis. The European Centre for Eco Agro Tourism (ECEAT) analysed the economic impact of two European Union-funded ecotourism projects implemented from 2007 to 2009. One was implemented in Zerafshan valley by German Agro Action and the other was implemented in the Greater Pamir area by the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP) (Kloiber 2007). The latter included a survey to analyse the project outcomes and made a general conclusion that proper establishment and management of ecotourism helped achieve short-term economic growth for the target communities (long-term economic benefit could not yet be measured).

Publications also focused on the unrealised economic potential of tourism in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, particularly when compared to the global growth of the industry and the relative economic success of Uzbekistan and Western China. The United Nations Investment Guide to the Silk Road (2009) is a comprehensive study that explores the potential investment climate in Central Asia. The Guide states that the new Silk Road Region “has a potential to become one of the world’s unique tourism destinations, and the distribution of interrelated tourism across the five countries makes it ideal for cross-border or regional investment opportunities” (UNCTAD 2009:10). The number of tourists interested in Silk Road tourism in Central Asia is growing exponentially, but the actual number of tourists in Tajikistan is still low (UNCTAD 2009:3).

Inadequate regulatory frameworks

Outdated laws, burdensome licensing processes and inadequate tourism regulations prevent both foreign and domestic investment and limit the capacity of local tour operators to make tourism economically viable.

Publications focused on Tajikistan highlighted regulatory inadequacies and made recommendations regarding the role of government. A study by Aknazarov et al (2002) included interviews with local eco-tourism stakeholders in the Pamirs and concluded that “There is no legal basis or official strategy for promoting tourism development in Tajikistan” (188). Other studies confirm the need for the government to establish a national tourism strategy (Yorov (2007:134); MSDSP (2010:23); Tait (2008:3)). Specifically, Yorov (2007) suggested that the government and responsible agencies focus on “establishing a system of financial responsibility ... and ... creating an enabling investment climate for domestic and international entities that invest into development of the tourism industry.” Tait’s Country Review and Evaluation Report for Tourism Development in Tajikistan (2008) suggests clarifying government roles and responsibilities when developing policies. He concludes that “when policies are to be modified, that Committee of Youth Affairs, Sports and Tourism under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan shall be allowed to provide the necessary investigation and due diligence to create a viable framework for addressing these issues while remaining consistent with Tajik political practices” (6).



Soviet Health Resort at Khoji Obi Garm, Tajikistan (Qobiljon Shokirov 2012)

Kyrgyz academic literature included similar conclusions about inappropriate state management on the economic viability of the tourism industry. Karymshakova (2008) stated, “Effective development of tourism in the Kyrgyz Republic is, to a great extent, hampered by the lack of clear public policy in the area of tourism development, inadequacy of public infrastructure, inadequate coverage of tourism development issues in scholarly and research work and lack of scientific methodology to justify the nature and extent of government regulation of the tourism industry” (106). Kasenov (2012) identified specific negative implications of government’s role: “...since 2001, tourism operators and tourism agents are no longer subject to licensing; this lack of government regulation, in turn, created multiple problems and complicated development of collaboration with external parties. All of these led to a disorganised, chaotic development of the tourism market” (4).

Palmer (2006), publishing in the international academic literature, concluded that the State Agency for Tourism in Kyrgyzstan has an “apathetic attitude” and does not contribute enough to the development of the tourism sector in Kyrgyzstan (56).

Inadequate quality of tourism services and infrastructure

The low quality of tourism services and facilities limits the industry’s economic viability. This is especially true of the quality of hotels and sanatorium facilities and substandard airport services. If Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are to be international destinations, they must meet international standards.

The decline of infrastructure and services in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is commonly referenced in tourism literature. Kojokmatov’s (2012) study on branding in tourism concluded that “in the vast majority of cases the tourism infrastructure in Kyrgyzstan is inadequate and does not meet the needs of tourists’ international requirements. The tourism infrastructure does not offer the necessary comfort, it is obsolete and significantly worn out. Massive investments are required into rehabilitation, modernisation and renovation. There is well-deserved criticism of the quality and range of services offered at many tourism destinations” (145).

Kyrgyzstan, and in particular the Issyk-Kul region, was well known in the Soviet era for high quality services at sanatoriums and hotels. During that period, sanatoriums were run by the labour unions and were strictly monitored for compliance with sanitary and other quality control requirements. Bokontaeva (2004) concluded that after 1990 most sanatoriums and resorts became private or joint-stock companies, which led to the abolition of common control systems and a subsequent reduction in the quality of infrastructure and standards of tourism service.

Finally, a survey of over 2,100 international and local tourists conducted by the Swiss State Secretariat for



Climbers at base camp, Fann Mountain, Tajikistan. (Qobiljon Shokirov, 2012)

Economic Affairs (SECO) concluded that “the level of service at the airports, both local and international, does not meet international standards” (2006: 63-64).

Inadequate technical skills and vocational training

Tourism will only be economically viable if service providers have technical skills. There is a need for vocational training of tourism service providers.

The lack of technical skills and relevant vocational training was highlighted in several publications as an impediment to the economic viability of tourism. GIZ/GOPA’s assessment of labour market needs for staff training in the tourism and textile industries at vocational education institutions suggests that lack of state level technical regulatory system for hotel services in Tajikistan (2012:6). An analysis of training programmes for tourism specialists in Tajikistan, similarly concluded that “There is a lack of qualified specialists who can provide services of appropriate quality in the tourism sector in Tajikistan” (Kadirov 2007: 305).

A review and evaluation report for tourism development in Tajikistan concluded, “vocational training is the key factor for tourism development in Tajikistan” (Tait 2008: 9). The report is based on the results of interviews with a variety of stakeholders and site visits conducted by the author. The report includes the following strategies to improve the competitiveness of tourism destinations: “1) Establish hospitality training centers within the university structure; and 2) Establish partnerships with foreign institutions to provide high quality hospitality training” (2008:10).

A report on the identification of cross border tourism destinations and development of tour packages, based on a two-week field visit and survey, concluded that there is a significant need for hospitality and vocational training to improve the capacity of tour operators, specifically in Badakhshan region of Tajikistan (Jones 2010). In contrast to Tait, Jones asserts that bringing in international experts on hospitality is costly and it would be more efficient to employ trainers residing in the region (2010).

The need for technical skills for tourism service provision and the lack of vocational training is relevant to at least two of the 12 aims: economic viability and visitor fulfillment.

Inadequate stakeholder collaboration

Sustained economic growth of the tourism industry depends on the ability of a complex network of tourism stakeholders to cooperate in the development, management and marketing of tourism in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Numerous publications on Tajikistan argue that tourism stakeholders, especially tourism operators, must see beyond short-term, individual gains from working competitively in isolation and instead work together to expand the tourism sector as a whole (Kloiber 2007; Odilova 2012; Jones 2010). Kloiber states that it is absolutely necessary for tourism partners “to improve internal communication” and “spend more time on participatory approach for tourism development in Tajikistan.” (*sic*) (2007:4). Jones (2010) points to the mutual benefit of collaboration around marketing and suggests that all local tour agencies should be advertised under one brand name developed collaboratively.

Some of the literature focused on stakeholder collaboration in Kyrgyzstan emphasised positive developments. Werner (2003) examined the role of tour operators in cultivating a positive image of Central Asia through the collaborative promotion of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan as new tourism destinations. Werner noted “although tour operators are in regular competition with each other, they also cooperate in alliance with and sometimes against another group of stakeholders” (156). A leading tour operator of Kyrgyzstan concluded that the adventure tourism sector, which has experienced growth rates of 15 to 20 percent in recent years, is an example of the benefits of cooperation; “Competition in this market manifests itself in increased cooperation between market players. Adventure tourism is probably the best example of fruitful collaboration, joint promotion and lobbying of interests by the tourism operators in Kyrgyzstan” (Komissarov 2003).

Economic opportunities in cross border tourism

Cross border cooperation represents an opportunity for making small-scale tourism businesses and eco-tourism projects economically viable for mountain communities in the border areas of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and China.

Publications relevant to economic viability largely focused on inadequacies and impediments. Cross border tourism cooperation, however, was frequently cited as an opportunity to make tourism viable in remote border areas. One recurring theme was the potential to promote the Central Asian region as a whole. “The future could be the past,” stated one study referring to the modern-day Silk Road region (UNCTAD 2009). The study argues that the “Silk Road region has the potential to become one of the world’s unique tourism destinations, and the distribution of interrelated tourism resources across the five countries makes it ideal for cross-border or regional investment opportunities” (9). The Pamir Alai Transboundary Conservation Area (PATCA) is an example of cross border collaboration between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Kloiber (2007) analysed PATCA activities in her case study on mountain eco-tourism in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and concluded that the collaboration resulted in small businesses, nurseries, crafts shops and small-scale eco-tourism projects that diversified sources of income in the region.



On the road to Sary-Tash village in the cross-border area of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, with a view of Peak Lenin (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/41948864@N00/1169863848/in/photolist-2MnRLm-4LJb2i-4LJb3V-a49GTs-hXQQBi-2MjLDC-2MirLZ-dB9koF>)

An MSDSP report identified and assessed high potential cross border tourism destinations between Tajikistan and Afghanistan. The study concluded that to “promote and develop cross-border tourism there needs to be significantly more cooperation between stakeholders on both sides of the border”. The study pointed out that links between MSDSP Tajikistan and the Aga Khan Foundation Afghanistan have to be strengthened towards this end (Jones 2010:3).

An MSDSP study on tourism development prospects in GBAO, Tajikistan investigated travel across national borders. The study concluded that there are no specific regulations or information for foreign tourists regarding visas and how to travel from Tajikistan to Afghanistan. In early 2000, travelling was only permitted for individuals affiliated with international non-governmental organisations working in the region. Travelling through Culma Pass across the Chinese border to Kashgar was also limited to only Tajik and Chinese citizens. The study concludes that there should be standard procedures for travelers moving between Tajikistan, China and Afghanistan. Local authorities should be able to negotiate and open the access road at cross border areas for tourists who could significantly contribute to the economic viability of tourism in border areas (MSDSP 2010).

Economic opportunities in Eco-tourism

Eco-tourism in Tajikistan promises good economic returns even without large investments.

Eco-tourism - defined in the reviewed publications as small-scale, community-based tourism that is ecologically and culturally friendly - was identified as a potential growth sector in the literature. Aknazarov, Iskandarov and Melnichkov's (2002) study on eco-tourism in the Pamir Region declared that “ecotourism is feasible in Tajikistan...and... ecotourism conserves major natural resources and would not require larger investment, could stimulate development of local private business, and promote sustainable development in the country” (2002:188). According to Kloiber (2011), the prospects of eco-tourism in Tajikistan were first prominently discussed at the Global Mountain Summit in Bishkek in 2002. Shortly after that, the first small-scale eco-tourism project was implemented by ACTED in Murgab, followed by small-scale MSDSP projects in Western Pamirs (14). Kloiber concluded that of the approximately 1,500 tourists who visited the Pamirs in 2003, 10 percent engaged in eco-tourism (14). The growing interest in eco-tourism from both tourists and tour operators has led to greater commitments by international aid agencies and the Government of Tajikistan. From 2007 to 2009, the European Union's Central Asia investment programme contributed a total budget of USD 692,959 to eco-tourism initiatives (37).

Eco-tourism also emerged in publications associated with the aims of “local prosperity” and “local control”.



Kyrgyz family engaged in eco-tourism in Kegety gorge near Tokmok (Qobiljon Shokirov, 2013)

4.2.2 Local Prosperity (27 publications)

“To maximise the contribution of tourism to the economic prosperity of the host destination, including the proportion of visitor spending which is retained locally” (UNEP and UNWTO 2005:30-32).

The second largest number of publications was devoted to the aim of “local prosperity”. A prominent theme was the need to specifically target tourism development in remote mountain areas. Topics included the potential for eco- and community-based tourism development in rural areas, the potential of privatisation, the role of foreign tour operators, and the need to target both human capacity and infrastructure development in rural communities.

Eco- and community-based tourism for local prosperity

Eco- and community-based tourism is effective means of promoting local prosperity. Local economic benefits from existing initiatives in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are limited to the formal CBT network.

Several publications touted the potential economic benefits of ecotourism including the creation of new, local jobs and the expansion of livelihood options in rural areas beyond agriculture (ACTED 2004; Hamidova 2010; Mumini 2011; Odilova 2012; UNESCO 2003). Specific activities mentioned included the valorisation of local museums, promotion and sale of local handicrafts, sale of local tours increasing the recreational use of national parks and other protected areas. One publication described the purpose of an eco-tourism project in the Eastern Pamirs as creating sufficient local economic opportunities to lower the labour migration rate to Russia (ACTED 2004)⁸.

The most detailed findings on local economic impact were linked to a CBT initiative that was developed in Kyrgyzstan with Swiss funding in the early 2000s. Watanabe et al. (2009) described how demand for CBT products and services increased since the initiative’s inception and that local benefits from tourism increased. During the 2008 tourist season, CBT members generated 412 direct jobs with an average salary of USD 40 per month (13). Asykulov (2012) estimated that each household in Arstanbap that is operating a business formally

⁸ The report concluded that while the project had a positive economic impact, but did not lower the migration rate.

Community-based Tourism (CBT) homestay families in Kochkor, Kyrgyzstan
(<https://www.flickr.com/photos/22627749@N08/6086531356/in/set-72157627292424947/>)



linked to the CBT initiative earns roughly approximately USD 245 to 306 per year. This makes up between five and 50 percent of their annual income.

A UNESCO report (2003) based on outcomes of a meeting on “Development of Cultural and Ecotourism in the Mountainous Regions of Central and South Asia”, included analyses of how much and at what scale ecotourism could benefit local communities in the Eastern Pamirs. A major recommendation was that the semi-nomadic life style and environment should be a key driver for tourism product development in the Eastern Pamirs. The report also recommended better marketing strategies, including detailed, refined itineraries and improved transportation and accommodation. Amatov and Amatova (2012) recommended community-based eco-tourism to support the development of economically depressed mining villages in Kyrgyzstan, located in remote, ecologically intact beautiful areas, such as Kadjy-Sai, Ak-Tuz, Kadam-Jai, and Maily-Suu.

Hamidova (2010), however, emphasised that despite potential local economic benefits of eco-tourism, there is not enough government support to develop the sector.

Odilova (2012) asserts, in her study on the challenges of creating and developing a regional tourism and recreation complex in the Republic of Tajikistan, how tourism could be developed to maximise local benefits; “Local community capacity development should assure local people that they would get diversified income, economic benefit from recreational tourism activities. These activities should develop and expand their knowledge on protection of the environment and historic and cultural places” (61).

Palmer (2006) analysed the role of external development agencies in the post-Soviet economy of Kyrgyzstan, describing a CBT project funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The project aims “to promote community-based cultural and ecotourism in selected mountainous areas, with a specific focus on poverty eradication, reduction of rural and urban migration and the preservation of cultural and natural heritage in rural areas”. Project beneficiaries are identified as “local communities selected in tourism areas”. Palmer concludes that the CBT project contributed to the development of ecotourism (58).

Role of privatisation for prosperity of tourism

Privatisation and denationalisation of tourism facilities can promote local prosperity.

New resort development around Lake Issyk Kul, Kyrgyzstan (Richard Towell, 2010)



Turmanbetov's (2003) analysis of mountain tourism in Chui Oblast, Kyrgyzstan, suggested that privatising and denationalising tourism facilities is a means of promoting local prosperity. The author argued that privatisation would increase private investment in remote areas where the government is not investing and that competition will increase the quality of tourism infrastructure and services. The author does not explain how the anticipated increased external investment would lead to local prosperity.

Foreign tour operators in Kyrgyzstan

Foreign tour operators in Peak Lenin area, Kyrgyzstan, are not contributing to local prosperity.

Watanabe et al (2009) investigated the local economic impact of trekking tourism in the Peak Lenin area of Kyrgyzstan, as well as tourists' perceptions of foreign tour companies. The study concluded that "tourism does not provide economic benefit to the local residents" because 80 percent of the tourists who visited the Lenin Base Camp were guided by tour companies based in Uzbekistan and 15 percent were led by companies based in Russia or Kazakhstan. Only 5 percent received services from companies based in Kyrgyzstan (12, 9). The report explains that the gateway village for Mount Lenin Base Camp, Kashka-Suu, has no homestays, yurt-stays, restaurants or souvenir shops, and is losing opportunities for tourism income. Watanabe et al suggest that the problem is partially due to lack of visitor concern about local prosperity. The survey found that only 31.7 percent of respondents were aware that foreign tour/trekking companies bring foreign clients to the area, and that they provide almost no income to the villages. Only 47.4 percent of the visitors surveyed considered this a great concern.

Tourism infrastructure in rural areas

Infrastructure is needed in rural areas in order for tourism to economically benefit rural communities.

Some publications highlighted the need for infrastructure development to enable local economic benefits. A survey in the Pamir-Alai mountains found overwhelming support for infrastructure development. "More than 90 percent of respondents desire tourism infrastructure development" (Watanabe et al 2009:12). Djenalieva (2011:173) also emphasised the need for such development throughout Kyrgyzstan, even in Issyk Kul, which has a relatively developed tourism infrastructure.



A view from 5300 metres in between Camp 2 and Camp 3 of Peak Lenin, Pamir Alai mountains, Kyrgyzstan (Serge Basin 2010)

4.2.3 Employment Quality (7 publications)

“To strengthen the number and quality of local jobs created and supported by tourism, including the level of pay, conditions of service and availability to all without discrimination by gender, race, disability or in other ways.” (UNEP and UNWTO 2005:30)

With the exception of some of the publications already described under the “local prosperity” aim, research on tourism employment in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan did not include analyses of the number of tourism-related jobs, levels of pay, seasonality, discrimination, conditions of service or other issues directly relevant to employment quality. Publications did however, focus on the low tourism skill base and limited training opportunities. Improvement in both areas was identified as necessary before employment quality could improve.

Lack of adequate human resources and high quality educational institutions in tourism sector

Technical skills and vocational training is important to make tourism economically viable in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. To promote local employment in tourism, efforts must be targeted at people from communities in and around existing and potential tourism destinations.

Baum and Thompson (2007) conducted a tourism skills inventory of Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia and Uzbekistan “based on two surveys of the accommodation and wider tourism sub-sector” during 2004. The inventory concluded that in all three countries “tourism employees have been exposed to very limited training and education for the job, which they undertake” (252) (*sic*). For instance, less than 15 percent of tourism employees in Kyrgyzstan have undergone professional training in 2004. Baum and Thompson recommended that tourism training should focus on relevant generic skills rather than technically and vocationally specific skills. For example, at that time, English language skills, interpersonal and communications skills were identified as deficient in Kyrgyzstan.

Baum (2007) used an extensive questionnaire to collect data from front office employees of three international standard hotels in Bishkek. The study found “relatively high levels of educational attainment among the respondents and a commitment to a long-term career in the hotel sector” (89) but a lack of “in-service training opportunities for service workers” (Baum 101).

In Tajikistan, GIZ/GOPA (2012) conducted an assessment of tourism labour market needs for staff training including a comprehensive questionnaire administered to tourism firms and vocational training institutions. The assessment found that 56 tourism firms operate in Tajikistan and roughly 30 percent of their employees are educated in the field of hospitality industry. There were three major conclusions: 1) There is a demand from tourism firms to “upgrad(e) qualification(s) of their staff through short-term training courses” at international standards; 2) Most educational institutions and vocational training schools on tourism do not provide training programmes targeting the current market needs; and 3) There is lack of collaboration between the tourism firms and educational institutions.

Finally, numerous authors pointed out that tourism-related technical skills and access to vocational training is mostly absent in remote, mountain areas that are or could be tourism destinations in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (Jorgensen 2012; Komissarov 2003a; SECO 2006; Shamshiev 2001; USAID 2011; Watanabe et al. 2009).

4.2.4 Social Equity (6 publications)

“To seek a widespread and fair distribution of economic and social benefits from tourism throughout the recipient community, including improving opportunities, income and services available to the poor.” (UNEP and UNWTO 2005:30)

Benefits of tourism to local communities

Community-based tourism contributes to economic development in remote communities of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Hamidova (2010) argues that tourism, particularly CBT, has the potential to create more job opportunities for local people and improve and diversify income in rural areas of Tajikistan. Achieving this, Hamidova (2010) argues, is contingent on government and private sector support. The study also points out that the government of Tajikistan recently took steps to make it easier for people to operate small-scale tourism businesses.

A key objective of the Novinomad project in Kyrgyzstan was the development of eco-tourism in Issyk Kul, with a focus on poverty eradication and the reduction of rural-urban migration (UNESCO 2004). The project and its members supported community-level cultural and ecotourism activities and increased awareness of eco-tourism and sustainability issues. Project outcomes led to the creation of sustainable tourism practices and income-generating activities, which helped to alleviate poverty in remote mountainous communities of Kyrgyzstan. Additionally, the project established a network of independent tourism service providers, providing the basis for the organisation and promotion of cultural events such as folklore, handicraft and national horse riding festivals.

4.2.5 Visitor Fulfillment (8 publications)

“To provide a safe, satisfying and fulfilling experience for visitors, available to all without discrimination by gender, race, disability or in other ways” UNEP & UNWTO (2005:30).

The limited number of publications that addressed visitor fulfillment focused on the range of challenges faced by visitors and the need to provide visitors with authentic experiences, especially through community-based tourism initiatives.

Challenges faced by tourists

Visitors confront a variety of health and hygiene, logistical and safety challenges.

A survey conducted by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO 2006) of over 2,100 international and local tourists identified challenges faced by tourists visiting Kyrgyzstan. These included insufficient power

CBT host families in Sonkul, Kyrgyzstan. (Audrey Manubrium 2013)



and water supplies, low levels of hygiene in public places, especially toilets, and a lack of sanitary facilities, including toilets. Foreign tourists also faced navigation problems due to the lack of signs in foreign languages. Almakuchkov and Rozanova (2004) studied tourist information and signs at Issyk Kul resorts. They concluded that instructions in Kyrgyz, Russian or Cyrillic letters were confusing for international and local tourists; “There is no uniformity in spelling and no Romanisation in maps, guides, advertising and marketing brochures, calendars and other similar materials (29)”. This limits the ability of tourists to navigate and participate in tourism activities. Komissarov (2008) described the challenges caused by visa regulations before Kyrgyzstan introduced a visa free regime for tourists, which still confront visitors to Tajikistan. Komissarov also highlighted safety challenges, including the need for an efficient mountain rescue service for adventure tourists in Kyrgyzstan. The SECO study also highlighted low-level but persistent threats of crime against foreign tourists in Kyrgyzstan (SECO 2006).

Visitor fulfillment through community-based tourism

Community-based tourism can reduce the logistical burden of tourists, ensure safe experiences, and provide an authentic experience for tourists.

Two publications focused on Tajikistan noted that logistical challenges negatively impact tourist experiences. They emphasised the role of CBT in reducing the logistical burden of tourists, ensuring safe experiences and providing an authentic experience for tourists. A survey by MSDSP and PECTA (2009) identified the need to develop a chain of host families with proper amenities to serve as home stay hosts in GBAO. For visitors interested in the culture and traditions of a destination, the study recommends that once visitors arrive, they should be integrated into the larger community and participate in a range of activities, including sightseeing, tours and making handicrafts. Hamidova (2010) concurred that there should be a well-established homestay network in Tajikistan, similar to the CBT network in Kyrgyzstan. She suggests that knowledge on how to do this could be transferred from Kyrgyzstan.

4.2.6 Local Control (22 publications)

“To engage and empower local communities in planning and decision making about the management and future development of tourism in their area, in consultation with other stakeholders” (UNEP and UNWTO 2005:30).

Remote communities in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan do not have sufficient control over tourism projects or resources mainly due to lack of cooperation and collaboration among stakeholders.



Tourist with their home stay family and guide in Alichur Valley, Eastern Pamirs, Tajikistan (Matt Traver 2013)



Local guide and tourist fishing in the Eastern Pamir Highlands, Tajikistan (Matt Traver 2013)

Contribution of international projects to locally controlled tourism

Projects supported by international donors and implemented by international organisations have contributed to locally controlled tourism in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

The literature described several internationally supported projects in rural Kyrgyzstan and two in the Eastern Pamirs of Tajikistan that successfully engaged and empowered local communities to take a central role in tourism development projects.

The Swiss organisation Helvetas supported the development of the CBT network in Kyrgyzstan and the empowerment of local communities through a project funded by SDC. CBT projects develop environmentally and socio-culturally responsible rural tourism in Kyrgyzstan.⁹ There are 18 CBT groups in Kyrgyzstan.

Palmer (2008) indicated that the establishment of a sustainable Destination Marketing Association (DMA), with the support of Helvetas, has positively contributed to development of viable tourism products as eco-tourism and community-based tourism throughout rural Kyrgyzstan. Jorgensen (2012) similarly concludes that the Sustainable Land Management in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains (PALM) project contributed positively to locally controlled tourism. The project was implemented by the United Nations University, administered by the United Nations Environment Programme, and funded primarily by the Global Environment Facility. Jorgensen claims that the project enabled local communities to drive the planning and management of micro-projects including rural community-based tourism operations (26). UNESCO's support of the Novinomad project similarly engaged communities in planning and decision-making related to community-based cultural and eco-tourism (UNESCO 2004).

The first eco-tourism project in Tajikistan was implemented in the Eastern Pamirs in 2002 by the French Agency for Technical and Cooperation and Development (ACTED) (Kloiber 2007). The project aimed to bring additional sources of income to isolated Pamiri communities. Local people run the project and work as tour guides, drivers, cooks and in technical aspects of tourism (Kloiber 2007).

⁹ <http://www.cbtkyrgyzstan.kg/index.php/en/o-nas>.

Local cooperation and local control

Local control of tourism can be enhanced through cooperation of local stakeholders

Two publications on Tajikistan identified competition between, and lack of cooperative decision-making among, local tourism stakeholders as a barrier to improved tourism planning and local control (Halinger, Breu, Hurni and Maselli 2010; ACTED 2004). Both highlighted the importance of cooperation and an integrated approach in identifying priorities and developing new products, especially in remote areas.

In Kyrgyzstan, Watanabe et al (2009) stated that the residents of remote mountain villages of Pamir-Alai should recognise the utility of eco-tourism resources before outside enterprises attempt inappropriate tourism development. Local organisations with community members in leadership are important in this process, including communal bodies within the local administrative office, an independent association of local guides and a local porter union.

Role of the centralised authorities in facilitating local control

Inadequate and inconsistent state support creates challenges for local tourism business planning.

Two publications identified inadequate ministry-level support and public-private partnerships, combined with inconsistent and outdated regulations, laws and visa requirements as challenges for locally controlled tourism (Tait 2008; UN EPR 2004). Outdated licensing regulations for tourism businesses were identified as a significant barrier to local control and economic viability. Both suggest simplified government-level policy to promote tourism development in Tajikistan.

Local control for cross border tourism development

Local control is essential for tourism development in remote cross border areas.

Several publications concluded that it is vital that Tajikistan cooperate with Afghanistan, China and Kyrgyzstan to develop its tourism sector (Jones (2010); MSDSP and PECTA 2010; UNESCO 2003; UNCTAD 2009). They explained that remote cross border areas are often out of reach of large tourism agencies and should be developed by local tourism businesses, ideally in cooperation with each other. UNCTAD therefore encourages governments to simplify regulations for tourism projects in crossborder areas.

4.2.7 Community Wellbeing (5 publications)

“To maintain and strengthen the quality of life in local communities, including social structures and access to resources, amenities and life support systems, avoiding any form of social degradation or exploitation” (UNEP and UNWTO 2005:30).

Inadequate tourism infrastructure and community wellbeing

Tourism’s impact on community wellbeing is negligible, largely due to the lack of tourism infrastructure development.

A study of economic and geographic factors in tourism development in Tajikistan (Dilovarov and Yorov 2009) explored the current state of destinations and sanatoriums in Zerafshan, Gissar, Vaksh, Garm and the Pamirs. The study found that facilities are not in good condition, are not being used by local communities and are not contributing to community wellbeing. For tourism to contribute to community wellbeing, the authors suggest the following: create a base for eco-tourism and support by the government; improve marketing strategies; create recreational programmes; establish a system of trails in national parks; create a corps of qualified staff; and educate and raise awareness in local communities on tourist destinations so they can socially benefit from these resources.

4.2.8 Cultural Richness (5 publications)

“To respect and enhance the historic heritage, authentic culture, traditions and distinctiveness of host communities.” (UNEP and UNWTO 2005:30)

Role of culture and heritage in tourism

While Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan both have a rich cultural heritage and long-standing traditions, these have not been sufficiently used in tourism, or preserved and enhanced through tourism planning and management.

In Tajikistan, historic and cultural tourism is not developed. It is only practiced on a small scale in Sogd and Khatlon states. In analysing tourism in these regions, Mirzoeva (2009) concluded that there is a great potential for tourism focused on historical museums, archeological sites and various cultural activities. Cultural and historical tourism is not practiced in the cities of Khujand, Istaravshan, Kulob and Penjikent where most of the historical and archeological sites are located. Currently these sites are under-utilised and there are no guided tours that focus on the cultural and historic heritage in Tajikistan. The author encouraged international organisations and the government of Tajikistan to prioritise this type of tourism and to invest in the preservation and development of vulnerable archeological and historic sites.

In Kyrgyzstan, there were no publications specifically focused on tourism and cultural richness. However, Palmer (2007) explored selective cultural representations in tourism promotion materials by Kyrgyz tour operators. UNESCO’s report (2004) on the Novinomad project mentions activities promoting cultural and eco-tourism, including the preservation of the Cholpon-Ata petroglyph site, the creation of an association of eco-tourism service providers, organisation of cultural events, and the creation of cultural and eco-tourism clubs for school children.

4.2.9 Physical Integrity (11 publications)

“To maintain and enhance the quality of landscapes, both urban and rural, and avoid the physical and visual degradation of the environment.” (UNEP and UNWTO 2005:30)

Planning for sustainable tourism and physical integrity

Physical integrity and the viability of tourism are interdependent and tourism planning plays an essential role in both.



Petroglyph museum,
Cholpon-Ata, near Lake Issyk
Kul, Kyrgyzstan (Anson
Mackay 2007)



Fann Mountains near Lake Kuli Kalon, Tajikistan (Qobiljon Shokirov 2012)

Several publications emphasised that tourism should be used as a tool to maintain and enhance the quality of landscapes (Haslinger et al 2010; Mumini 2011; UNESCO 2003; Vahnenko 2010). They further stress that planning and management of national parks and public lands should prevent environmental degradation. Mirzoeva (2009) and Odilova (2012) also emphasised the need for government funding and a long-term strategy to ensure proper planning and management of common lands and national parks.

Djunusov (2001) concluded that certain types of tourism in Kyrgyzstan would not support physical integrity. Specifically, “mass tourism in mountains areas is extremely unstable and short-lived, as it promotes the degradation of the natural environment in a short period of time” (70). Dzhumashev (1990) observed in a late Soviet era publication, that the creation of new tourism facilities would exacerbate the impact of natural disasters in steep slopes and riverbed areas. He suggested that once recreational facilities are built, mitigation measures should be put in place. Berdieva (2012) found that air, soil and water in the Jalal-Abad region do not fully meet State Committee of Environmental Protection environmental standards. Growing human impact and climate change have impacted the walnut and fruit forests in the region.

4.2.10 Biological diversity (20 publications)

“To support the conservation of natural areas, habitats and wildlife, and minimise damage to them.” (UNEP and UNWTO 2005:30)

Protected areas and tourism

National parks and other protected areas in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are under-utilised as tourism resources. Revenues generated from tourism could be invested in biodiversity conservation in these areas.

A study by Haslinger et al (2010) focused on Tajik National Park in the Pamir Mountains. Haslinger et al (2010) stated that while tourism in the park is rare, there are opportunities to promote tourism through the ‘National Park’ label and by investing in the development of the park’s property. Currently, however, the authors concluded that the Park is threatened by “(i) intensified use of biomass as a fuel resource, (ii) inappropriate pasture management, and (iii) increased pressure on endangered wildlife” (157). Kloiber (2007) and Diloarov and Yorov (2009) also recommend the development of small-scale CBT in and around parks and protected areas in Tajikistan. Kloiber also focused on Tajik National Park.



Sary Chelek nature reserve in southern Kyrgyzstan (Evgeniy Zotov 2008)

In Kyrgyzstan, Abdykadyrov, the first researcher of recreational functions of Issyk Kul oblast, suggested that recreational options be enhanced through the creation of protected areas in Kyrchyn, Karkyra, Karakol and Boom Gorges, with a focus on educational programmes (Abdykadyrov 1985). Abdykadyrova (2007) also recommended zoning the recreational use of water resources in Issyk Kul based on indicators of availability of field conditions for water recreation, degree of recreational development and recreational water use priorities for further tourism development.

Asykulov (2012) studied the walnut and fruit forests of southern Kyrgyzstan and CBT activities in Arstanbap as recreational resources. He concluded that it is necessary to preserve the main natural resources of the territory, walnut and fruit forests, which drive the natural environmental diversity in the area.

4.2.11 Environmental Purity (4 publications)

“To minimise the pollution of air, water and land and the generation of waste by tourism enterprises and visitors” (UNEP and UNWTO 2005:30).

Waste management

Poor waste management practices negatively impact tourism.

Vahnenko (2010) focused on the lack of collection and disposal of garbage on Peak Lenin, a popular mountain climbing destination accessed from southern Kyrgyzstan; “Over the years of tourism development, the mountainous area of Peak Lenin was subjected to intensive human intervention, so that on the slopes of the peak, between 9 to 21 tons of garbage accumulated” (125). Vahnenko argued that the continuation of such practices will lead to fewer visitors and negative publicity about the site and Kyrgyzstan more broadly.

5. Limitations of Research and Recommendations for Future Research

Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industries globally. Further growth is predicted over the coming decade, particularly in developing and transitioning countries (UNEP and UNWTO 2005:2). The 12 Aims of Sustainable Tourism Framework highlights principles of sustainable development in tourism and the need for a balance between environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development (UNEP and UNWTO 2005). The framework is especially pertinent in countries like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, where tourism is primarily based on the natural environment, especially mountain ecosystems. Additionally, these countries have not experienced the growth in tourism seen in other developing countries, and could benefit from a comprehensive approach to developing sustainable tourism.

5.1 Limitations of Existing Research

Several limitations of research on tourism in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan became evident during this review process.

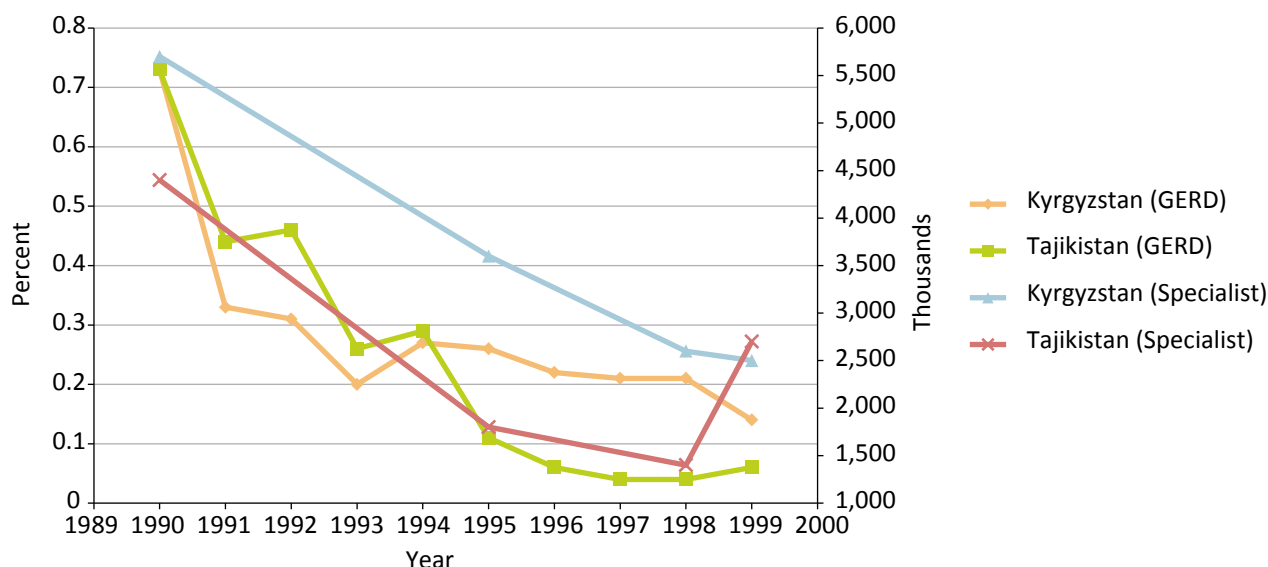
A narrow focus: In contrast to the balance of aims recommended by the 12 Aims of Sustainable Tourism Framework, this review found that research on tourism in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan overwhelmingly focuses (87 percent) on economic aims. Nearly half (48 percent) of the reviewed literature focused on “economic viability” and almost a third (31 percent) on the economic aim of “local prosperity”. Many publications emphasised the economic potential for tourism. However, they also described the poor economic performance of the sector and the limited degree to which local stakeholders economically benefit from tourism (with the exception of successful households in the CBT network in Kyrgyzstan).

Social and environmental aspects of tourism, such as visitor fulfillment, resource efficiency, employment quality and environmental quality were less evident in the research. The few publications that focused on non-economic aims identified emerging social and environmental challenges caused or exacerbated by tourism.

The framework provides a useful model in which to view tourism as a means to achieve both economic and other development goals. These may include the equitable distribution of economic benefits and the effective management of the natural and human-created resources on which tourism is based. Despite the overwhelming focus on economic aims, there are still considerable gaps in research regarding tourism-related sustainable economic growth. However, if tourism is seen as a tool for achieving other development goals, the research must expand its focus beyond economic growth.

Lack of research and researchers: While the development of tourism was a priority for the Soviet Union, the sector did not develop a congruent body of research in the Kirghiz and Tajik republics. Research, in any sector, was also not prioritised in the years immediately following independence. Egorov (2002) notes a tremendous decline in spending in research and development as a share of GDP, and in the number of specialists in research and development in post-Soviet states (see Figure 8). While tourism, and other, research has increased in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in the past decade, there are only a few qualified researchers focusing on this area who have produced a small body of research.

Figure 8. Expenses in Research and Development as a share of GDP (GERD) and Number of specialists involved in R&D in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in 1990-99.



Source: Adapted from Egorov (2002)

Tourism in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan has also not been explored by external academic researchers or research institutions; we only found nine international publications on tourism in Kyrgyzstan and only two on Tajikistan. Most of the literature we found was related to international development projects.

Inadequate quality of research: Unlike research in other sectors, research on tourism in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is not building on a strong foundation established in the Soviet era. Standards of quality are still being established. Most of the research reviewed did not adhere to rigorous standards. Local literature is often not peer reviewed and lacks a clear articulation of research questions, methods or conclusions.

Research quality is also hindered by the lack of valid and reliable data. Official statistics on tourism are collected by the National Statistics Committees of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. These data are not released consistently by the agencies and are not publicly accessible. Improved data collection and dissemination on tourism in both countries is needed for use by researchers as well as by practitioners and policy and planning decision-makers. Both governments should consider using the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA).¹⁰

Limitations of development literature: A number of tourism projects have been implemented by external donors in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. These are development projects aimed at improving economic opportunities and income and raising awareness about the development of remote and rural mountain areas. Much of the gray literature reviewed was about projects like these and was limited in perspective. Many donor-supported projects hire international consultants who may not have either backgrounds in research or area studies. Consultant reports are often based on quick field trips and desk research and often exclude the perspectives of destination residents and local experts.

¹⁰ The Tourism Satellite Account (TSA), which is consistent with the System of National Accounts, provides a standard to measure the economic contribution of tourism and compares it to other economic sectors. TSA was developed by the UNWTO (with significant advancements being made in Canada) and endorsed by the UN Statistical Committee in 2002.

5.2 Recommendations for Future Research

In this section, we propose an agenda for future applied research to promote more sustainable tourism in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Specifically, we compare the findings on the state of tourism research on Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (as discussed in Section 4) to the policy implications of a sustainable tourism agenda identified in the 12 Aims Framework (see Section 2 and Annex 1).

We assess the degree to which each policy area is addressed in tourism research. We then identify and prioritise relevant knowledge gaps that could be filled by research to inform policy and practice in the future. *Specific recommendations are in italics.*

5.2.1 Economic Viability

The lack of reliable and accessible data on tourism in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan makes it difficult to make economic decisions informed by scientific data and current realities. *Research is needed to generate reliable tourism statistics to assess demand and supply. These data can also inform analyses of the competitiveness of tourism destinations and other factors influencing the growth and sustainability of tourism*

Many tourism enterprises in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan struggle with a burdensome and inefficient regulatory system. *Research is needed to investigate the costs of doing business within these regulatory systems and investigate options for more efficient systems that will enable and not deter tourism enterprise development.*

In Tajikistan there is a lack of hospitality training and tourism education among institutions of higher learning. *Research could inform proper curriculum development for higher institutions.*

The remote cross border areas of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and China were identified as having great economic potential for cross-border tourism. *Research should explore the viability of tourism in these areas. Research could explore how to effectively market and promote tourism in remote areas that are largely unheard of. Research could also focus on the challenges and opportunities for incorporating tourism activities into the livelihood portfolios of natural resource dependent communities in these areas. Finally, research could inform both local and bi-lateral regulatory frameworks for managing cross-border initiatives.*

Eco-tourism was highlighted as an economically viable form of tourism in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. *Research should focus on trends in eco-tourism development in similar contexts, the changing customer base for eco-tourism, and regulatory frameworks to support the development of small-scale businesses in rural areas.*

5.2.2 Local Prosperity

The aim of local prosperity highlights the need to ensure that economic benefits are enjoyed by local communities. Many internationally organised tours in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan do not contribute to the prosperity of tourism destinations. *Research should focus on the types of tourism that are beneficial to local communities. Analysis should also be done on how to maximise economic benefits and minimise economic costs of tourism in destination communities.*

Some locally owned tour operators do not contribute to local prosperity. Most earned income stays among the tour operators. Greater impact could be achieved through coordination and diversification of local businesses. *Research should look at links between tourist and other enterprises and address the local supply chain. Research can help identify the needs of both tourist enterprises and their customers to support business creation and diversification in and around destinations.*

5.2.3 Employment Quality

Employment based on tourism is a key benefit to host destinations. *Research should investigate the degree to which different types of tourism lead to job creation. A particular emphasis could be on the positive and negative aspects of seasonal employment. Research also could explore ways of linking universities and tourism enterprises so qualified candidates can be linked to quality jobs in the sector.*

5.2.4 Social Equity

Community Based Tourism (CBT) has contributed to a more widespread distribution of tourism benefits to rural households in Kyrgyzstan than other type of tourism. Beyond CBT, there has been little emphasis on understanding benefit distribution within host communities. *Using the household-level success of CBT as a starting point, research should focus on enabling factors for disadvantaged groups within communities to earn income from (or at least not be harmed by) tourism in rural areas. Further research could focus on mechanisms for using income from tourism to support community-level programmes.*

5.2.5 Visitor Fulfillment

The review suggests that Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan do not provide safe, satisfying and fulfilling experiences for visitors. Kyrgyzstan's new visa-free regime for visitors from selected countries and the authentic and safe experiences provided by the CBT network are encouraging signs of improved visitor fulfillment and can serve as an example for Tajikistan. *Research should focus on understanding threats to visitor safety and security and the challenges and opportunities of addressing those threats. Research should also be used to monitor visitor satisfaction and the quality of tourism experiences, through regular visitor surveys. Further research should examine the quality of facilities, hygiene and services and the creation of basic industry standards.*

5.2.6 Local Control

Communities in and around host destinations do not control and are largely uninvolved in decision-making regarding tourism development in their areas. *Research should explore opportunities and barriers to fostering local engagement and empowerment, including economic and other incentives for business and government actors.*

The potential of cross border tourism in Tajik, Kyrgyz, Afghan and Chinese border areas will likely only be realised with the significant involvement of local communities in tourism planning and management. *Research should identify areas for capacity building to promote tourism in these areas. Research should also identify both opportunities and barriers to fostering local engagement and empowerment in these areas.*

In Tajikistan, the introduction of CBT could serve as the foundation for tourism development in remote areas, to conserve natural areas and contribute to the well being of communities. *Research could help to explore the implementation and acceptance of CBT in remote areas of Tajikistan.*

5.2.7 Community Wellbeing

The development of tourism infrastructure and services can aid or strain community access to services. *Tourism impact assessments can identify both positive and negative influences of tourism infrastructure development on community services. Research can also investigate the social impact of visitor interactions with destination communities.*

5.2.8 Cultural Richness

Rich cultural heritage and traditions are important components of popular tourism experiences in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. *Research should explore appropriate and effective means of conserving historic sites. Research should focus on more deeply understanding their significance and how they could most appropriately be presented to tourists.*

5.2.9 Physical Integrity

Compared to other countries, the number of tourists visiting Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan is relatively low. However, the literature still identified some diminished physical integrity of natural areas due to unsustainable tourism destination management. *Research should monitor destination conditions and identify physical vulnerabilities. Research can aid in understanding and mitigating the negative impact of use and infrastructure development. Finally, research can inform protocols to manage the sustainable use of tourist destinations.*

5.2.10 Biological Diversity

As the sector grows, tourism will increasingly impact national parks and other protected areas in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. *Research should identify beneficial or destructive influences of tourism in protected areas. It can inform decision-making to create protected areas and protocol for managing them. Research can also help assess government efforts to fulfill their responsibilities under the Convention on Biological Diversity, which both countries have ratified.*

5.2.11 Resource Efficiency

There was no literature devoted to resource efficiency in either Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan. As tourism facilities develop in areas facing water scarcity, such as the high Pamirs, *research should focus on the impact of tourism on water resources and use. It should also inform the creation of water and other resource management systems.*

5.2.12 Environmental Purity

Waste and pollution in and around tourism attractions affect environmental and human health in destination communities and negatively impacts the visitor experience. This is evident in the popular Peak Lenin area. However, this issue was barely mentioned in the reviewed literature. *Research should focus on mechanisms to minimise and manage waste in destination areas. Research should also inform policy on the development and enforcement of environmental standards.*



French tourists settling down to camp in Naryn, Kyrgyzstan (Qobiljon Shokirov, 2013)

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Annex 1. Policy Areas of a Sustainable Tourism Agenda

Economic Viability — Understanding the market; delivering visitor satisfaction; maintaining good trading conditions; maintaining and projecting an attractive destination and delivering business support.

Local Prosperity — Reducing leakages; strengthening links between businesses and influencing levels of visitor spending.

Employment Quality — Increasing employment opportunities and the proportion of year round, full-time jobs; ensuring and enforcing labour regulations; encouraging enterprises to provide skills training programmes and career advancement and concern for the wellbeing of workers who lose their jobs.

Social Equity — Developing income-earning opportunities for disadvantaged people and Utilizing income from tourism to support social programmes.

Visitor Fulfillment — Improving access for all; providing holiday opportunities for the economically and socially disadvantaged; maintaining a duty of care to visitors and monitoring and addressing visitor satisfaction and the quality of experience.

Local Control — Ensuring appropriate engagement and empowerment of local communities; improving the conditions for effective local decision making and addressing the specific position of indigenous and traditional communities with respect to local control.

Community Well Being — Getting the balance right in the volume; timing and location of visits; reducing congestion; careful planning and management of tourism enterprises and infrastructure; promoting mutual use of facilities and services by residents and tourists and influencing the behaviour of tourists towards local communities.

Cultural Richness — Ensuring effective management and conservation of cultural and historic heritage sites and working with communities on the sensitive presentation and promotion of culture and traditions.

Physical Integrity — Ensuring that new tourism development is appropriate to local environmental conditions; minimizing the physical impact of tourist activity and maintaining high quality rural and urban landscapes as a tourism resource.

Biological Diversity — Working with national parks and other protected areas; promoting development and management of ecotourism; using tourism to encourage landholders to practice sustainable land management; working with private parks and reserves; minimizing damage to natural heritage from tourism; raising visitor awareness of biodiversity and raising support for conservation from visitors and enterprises.

Resource Efficiency — Taking account of resource supply in the planning of tourism development and vice versa; minimizing water consumption by the tourism sector; ensuring the efficient use of land and raw materials in tourism development; promoting a reduce, reuse, recycle mentality.

Environmental Purity — Promoting the use of more sustainable transport; reducing the use of environmentally damaging chemicals; avoiding the discharge of sewage to marine and river environments; minimizing waste and where necessary disposing of it with care and influencing the development of new tourism facilities.

Annex 2. Survey Questionnaire

I. CODING INFORMATION

Document code

II. AUTHOR AND DOCUMENT INFORMATION

What is the surname of the first author?

What year was the document published?

What language is the document?

- ☐ English
- ☐ Russian
- ☐ Kyrgyz
- ☐ Tajik
- ☐ Other. Explain _____

What is the document type?

- ☐ International academic journal article
- ☐ HAC-approved journal article
- ☐ Dissertation summary
- ☐ Grey literature
- ☐ Other. If other, explain. _____

III. GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

On what country(s) does the document focus? Choose one of the following:

- ☐ Kyrgyzstan
- ☐ Tajikistan
- ☐ Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan
- ☐ Kyrgyzstan plus other countries
- ☐ Tajikistan plus other countries
- ☐ Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan plus other countries

Annex 2. Survey Questionnaire

If the document addresses tourism issues as a sub-national level, on which oblasts does the document focus?

- ☐ Batken Oblast
- ☐ Chui Oblast
- ☐ Issyk Kul oblast
- ☐ Jalal-Abad Oblast
- ☐ Naryn Oblast
- ☐ Osh Oblast
- ☐ Talas Oblast
- ☐ Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast
- ☐ Khatlon Oblast
- ☐ Region of Republican Subordination
- ☐ Sughd Oblast
- ☐ The document does not focus at the sub-national level

Does the document focus on a particular tourism destination?

- ☐ Pamirs
- ☐ Pamir highway
- ☐ Tajik Wakhan
- ☐ Zerafshan Valley
- ☐ Seven lakes
- ☐ Panjikent
- ☐ Dushanbe area
- ☐ Khujand areas
- ☐ Shahrستان
- ☐ Artuch
- ☐ Bishkek
- ☐ Karokul
- ☐ Issykkul
- ☐ Arslanbob
- ☐ Ala Archa
- ☐ Uzgen
- ☐ Osh
- ☐ Tash – Rabat
- ☐ Cholpon-Ata

IV. CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

What is the primary contribution to knowledge in the document? Copy and paste or paraphrase up to 300 words in the text box below.

What type of contribution does the document make?

- ☐ Findings from primary empirical research
- ☐ Findings from analysis of secondary data
- ☐ Findings of local Tajik and Kyrgyz research studies
- ☐ Other. Explain _____

To which “Aim(s)” of sustainable tourism does the document’s primary contribution relate most closely? Choose up to three. (Refer to definitions of “Aims” in UNEP and WTO 2005).

- ☐ Economic Viability
- ☐ Local Prosperity
- ☐ Employment Quality
- ☐ Social Equity
- ☐ Visitor Fulfillment
- ☐ Local Control
- ☐ Community Well Being
- ☐ Cultural Richness
- ☐ Physical Integrity
- ☐ Biological Diversity
- ☐ Resource Efficiency
- ☐ Environmental Purity
- ☐ Other. Please specify _____

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Does the document make explicit recommendations for future research?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes. If yes, copy and paste or paraphrase up to 300 words in the text box below.

Annex 2. Survey Questionnaire

To which “Aim(s)” of sustainable tourism do the recommendations for future research relate most closely?
Choose up to three.

- ☐ Economic Viability
- ☐ Local Prosperity
- ☐ Employment Quality
- ☐ Social Equity
- ☐ Visitor Fulfillment
- ☐ Local Control
- ☐ Community Well Being
- ☐ Cultural Richness
- ☐ Physical Integrity
- ☐ Biological Diversity
- ☐ Resource Efficiency
- ☐ Environmental Purity
- ☐ Other. Please specify _____

VI. ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

About what type of tourism does the document primarily focus?

- ☐ Adventure Tourism
- ☐ Mountain Tourism
- ☐ Eco Tourism
- ☐ Nature Tourism
- ☐ Spa and Wellness Tourism
- ☐ Medical Tourism
- ☐ Silk Road Tourism
- ☐ Cultural Tourism
- ☐ Heritage and Historical Tourism
- ☐ Business Tourism

About which of the following does the document primarily focus?

- ☐ Individual
- ☐ Mahalla
- ☐ Jamoat

- ☐ District (nohiya/rayon),
- ☐ Province (viloyat,oblast)
- ☐ National
- ☐ Aiyl
- ☐ Aiyl Hukumaty
- ☐ Rayon
- ☐ Oblast
- ☐ National

Does the document address the role of protected areas in tourism?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes

Does the document address tourism regulations (state, local) issues?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No



Group of tourist at Ala Archa National Park going up to the Upper Ala-Arche ski resort (3410m), led by Simon Charre. (Qobiljon Shokirov, 2014)





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